Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, H-307
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Rogers and Ranking Member Cartwright:

Thank you for your continued commitment to programs across the United States working to improve reentry, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety through the Second Chance Act. In 2018, members of Congress and stakeholders from across the country celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Second Chance Act, and we urge your continued support for these programs in the FY 2024 Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill.

At the end of 2020, federal, state, and local correctional facilities held more than 1.6 million people.[1] This amounted to nearly 1 in every 150 adult U.S. residents. Unfortunately, most individuals face numerous challenges when returning to the community from prison, and research has suggested that as many as 40 percent of people released from prison are reincarcerated. As you know, the Second Chance Act is a common-sense, evidence-based approach to improving public safety. State and local governments as well as non-profit organizations need resources in order to ensure that the millions of individuals returning from prison, jail, and juvenile facilities each year continue to receive coordinated evidence-based reentry services. These grants will provide crucial resources at a time when they are desperately needed. Below are examples of how states have used these funds:

- The **Kentucky** Department of Labor and the Eastern Kentucky Comprehensive Employment Program received a Second Chance grant in 2022 to improve reentry outcomes for women in Harlan County. The program will offer pre- and post-release job training and placement services, evidence-based intensive outpatient and residential treatment, transitional recovery housing, and continuity of care without interruptions in needed medications for women with serious mental illnesses. This collaborative project is expected to provide at least 60 women with core predictors of reentry success: safe housing, gainful employment, and appropriate community-based behavioral healthcare services. A total of 26 grants have been awarded to agencies and organizations in Kentucky.

[1] Rich Kluckow and Zhen Zeng, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2020—Statistical Tables* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022), available at bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus20st.pdf.

- In **Pennsylvania**, the Allegheny County Reentry Initiative links sentenced individuals with service coordination, education, job readiness, treatment for substance use disorders and mental illness treatment, family supports, and other services at least five months prior to release. Service providers assess the risk and need of every individual during his or her first 30 days in jail and collaborate with jail staff to direct individuals to needed in-jail services and treatments. An evaluation conducted by the Urban Institute found that the program had reduced re-arrest rates among participants by more than 50 percent.[2] Pennsylvania has received a total of 52 Second Chance grants.

- In **Alabama**, 13 Second Chance grants have gone to state and county agencies and nonprofit organizations in the state, including the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles, which piloted a day reporting center, a non-residential treatment facility designed to offer aid to medium- to high-risk individuals under probation or parole supervision, in the Jefferson County area. Evidence-based programming is aimed at reducing recidivism and helping people thrive after release through services that include substance addiction treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy, education, and assistance with employment. The grantee, IMPACT Family Counseling—a faith-based organization located in Birmingham—runs pre- and post-release reentry coaching and skills-building classes, in addition to mentoring. In the program's first two and a half years of implementation, IMPACT served 219 participants through one-on-one mentoring, 180 of whom were released from prison. Of those, 113 completed IMPACT's 12-month post-release program.[3]

- In Fort Worth, **Texas**, participants of Pathfinders' Second Chance-funded mentoring program have recidivated at lower rates than participants of previous programs; in a group of women taking part in the program, less than 15 percent had reoffended over a two-year period.[4] Santa Maria Hostel's Path to Recovery Program in Harris County, which provides treatment for substance use disorders, supportive housing, and mentoring services to formerly-incarcerated women, also reported that between 2013 and 2015, 82 percent of program participants had no record of reoffending of any kind.[5] In total, Texas agencies and organizations have received 59 Second Chance grants.

- The **Connecticut** Judicial Branch expanded its staff training program giving probation officers the tools they need to help people on probation address specific thinking patterns that can lead to poor decision making. Researchers at Central Connecticut State University helped

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[2] Janeen Buck Willison, Sam G. Bieler, and KiDeuk Kim, *Evaluation of the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative Reentry Programs* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2014), available at www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/33641/413252-Evaluation-of-the-Allegheny-County-Jail-Collaborative-Reentry-Programs.PDF.

[3] Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Second Chance Act Spotlight: Byron Davis, Birmingham, Alabama," July 5, 2018, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/2018/07/05/second-chance-act-spotlight-byron-davis-birmingham-alabama/.

[4] Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Second Chance Act Program Spotlight: Paths to Recovery, Santa Maria Hostel—Harris County, Texas," September 21, 2017, available at csgjusticecenter.org/2017/09/21/second-chance-act-program-spotlight-paths-to-recovery-santa-maria-hostel-harris-county-texas/.

[5] Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Second Chance Act Grantee Achieves Dramatic Results for High-Risk Women," February 17, 2016, available at csgjusticecenter.org/2017/02/17/second-chance-act-grantee-achieves-dramatic-results-for-high-risk-women/.

develop scripts focused on cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to guide probation officers' routine interactions with the people they supervise. Over time, the partners adopted a train-the-trainer approach that includes prepare a group of peer coaches to train new officers and provide refresher sessions, making CBT a regular practice that is set up for long-term implementation.[6] Connecticut agencies and organizations have received 28 Second Chance grants.

- The **Florida** Department of Corrections piloted the Alternative Sanctions Program (ASP) in Pinellas County to reduce incarceration among people who violate their probation conditions. The department developed a decision matrix consisting of community-based sanctions for 12 common, low-level infractions as alternatives to incarceration, and officers administered rewards such as reduced supervision level and verbal praise to reinforce positive behaviors among people enrolled in ASP. An evaluation of the program found that approximately 44 percent of participants were successful during their first year in the program, having no further involvement with the criminal justice system, and the county saw significant cost savings: serving participants in the community rather than incarcerating them in prison or jail saved $3,697,062 and $8,176,273, respectively, even when accounting for both positive and negative discharges.[7] Florida has received a total of 55 grants.

- The **Virginia** Department of Corrections' Building Family Bridges project launched several pre- and post-release strategies to foster positive parent-child engagement, including evidence-based parenting curricula, staff training on trauma, community facilitator positions to connect families to supports, and family-friendly spaces in correctional facilities for visits. With a different grant, the department also implemented an administrative response matrix to enhance officers' responses to technical violations and reduce probation and parole revocations. Agencies and organizations in Virginia have received a total of 25 grants.[8]

The Second Chance Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law in April 2008 and reauthorized as part of the landmark First Step Act, authorized funding for programs that will improve coordination of reentry services and policies for adults and youth at the state and local levels. These programs provide a range of services, including employment assistance, treatment for substance use disorders and mental illness, housing services, family-centered programming and mentoring, and other evidence-based reentry programs. In addition, it supports the Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Program, which provides funding to state, local and Tribal governments, as well as community-based nonprofit organizations, to enhance or implement clinical services and other evidence-based responses to improve reentry, reduce recidivism and address the treatment and recovery needs of people with mental health, substance use or co-occurring disorders who are currently or were formerly involved in the criminal justice system

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[6] National Reentry Resource Center (September 30, 2022). *Reentry Grant State Profiles: Connecticut,* https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/NRRC-State-Reentry-Supports-Connecticut.pdf

[7] National Reentry Resource Center (September 30, 2022). *Reentry Grant State Profiles: Florida,* https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/NRRC-State-Reentry-Supports-Florida.pdf

[8] National Reentry Resource Center (September 30, 2022). *Reentry Grant State Profiles: Virginia,* https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/NRRC-State-Reentry-Supports-Virginia.pdf.

The program also supports the recently launched Reentry 2030, a national initiative to achieve better and more equitable reentry and reintegration outcomes by engaging states to adopt public, ambitious goals that drive system change. Reentry 2030 is a partnership between the Correctional Leaders Association, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and JustLeadershipUSA.

State and local governments and nonprofit organizations around the country are eager to launch innovative reentry programs, and families and communities are desperate to access the services the Second Chance Act will provide. By supporting this program, Congress can help to break the pattern of recidivism and ensure public safety. We urge your continued support for funding for this important program in FY 2024.

Sincerely,

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

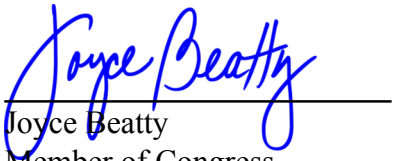
Stacey E. Plaskett
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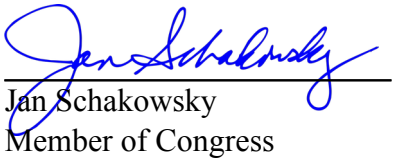
John P. Sarbanes
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Joyce Beatty
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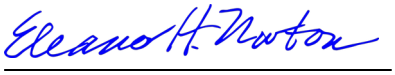
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



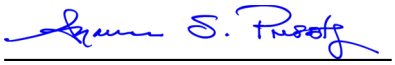
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



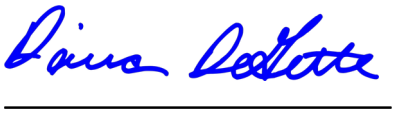
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



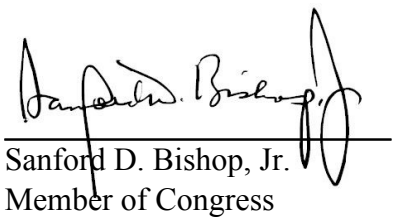
Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Nancy Mace
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Diana DeGette
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



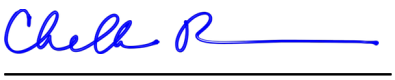
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



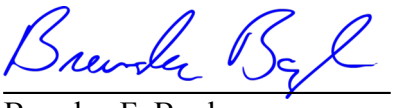
Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



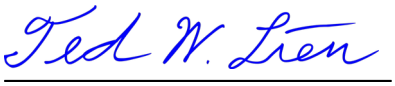
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



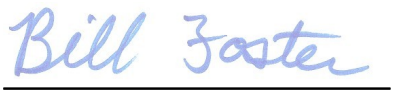
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



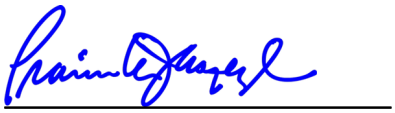
Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



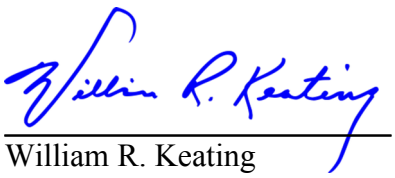
Bill Foster
Member of Congress



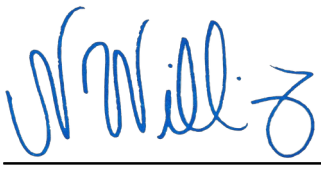
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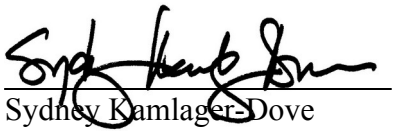
Tony Cárdenas
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Jim Costa
Member of Congress



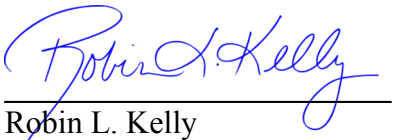
Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



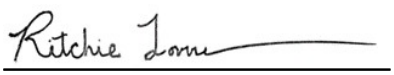
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



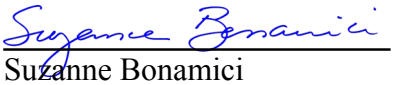
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



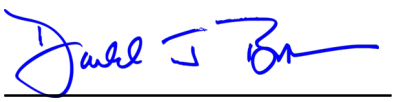
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Jonathan L. Jackson
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Terri A. Sewell
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Josh Gottheimer
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Emilia Strong Sykes
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Jerrold Nadler
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Frederica S. Wilson
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
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Troy Carter
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Donald G. Davis
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Hillary J. Scholten
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Julia Brownley
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Brian Higgins
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Rick Larsen
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